



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Henry J. Mroz Administration Office
155 Merrimack Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

John J. Leahy
Mayor and Chairperson

Andre P. Descoteaux
Vice-Chairperson

Hilary Clark
Michael Dillon Jr.
Jackie Doherty
Connie A. Martin

Curriculum & Instruction
Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday, March 10, 2021
Zoom – Virtual Meeting
5:30 p.m.

Tel: (978) 674-4324

Fax: (978) 937-7609

Subcommittee Members Present:

Chairperson Ms. Martin, Ms. Clark and Ms. Doherty

School Committee Members Present:

Mayor Leahy, Mr. Descoteaux and Mr. Dillon

School Department Personnel Present:

Ms. Desmond, Chief Academic Officer
Mr. Lovato, Director of Special Education

This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. 30A, Section 20.

Chairperson Martin called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. The following agenda item was discussed:

1. Special Education Updates

Ms. Martin asked Ms. Desmond to address the Subcommittee. Ms. Desmond introduced Mr. Lovato and asked him to go over the PowerPoint presentation provided. The presentation is comprised of the following:

- Compliance Data
- Update on Open Positions
- Enrollment – Remote and In-Person Learning
- Family Engagement & Outreach

Mr. Lovato stated that the district is making great progress in the Special Education Department, and he is incredibly proud of the work his staff has been doing. He spoke about compliance data and stated the department has a tracking system to monitor initial evaluations, re-evaluations, annual reviews, and additional meetings. Below is the most recent data shared:

- ✓ Evaluations completed: 325
 - SLP Evaluations - 239
 - Evaluations Pending: 144
 - Re-Evaluations Completed: 240
- ✓ Annual Reviews Completed: 955
- ✓ Annuals Pending: 971
- ✓ Annual Reviews Scheduled: 184

Ms. Martin asked if the final quarter is from now until June and if the reviews are on a rolling basis.

Mr. Lovato responded yes, that is correct and that he has full confidence that the department will achieve the numbers.

He stated that school Psychologists continue to make great progress and he shared testing sites that are strategically placed throughout the City for school Psychologists to conduct testing. The list of schools are as follows:

- Pyne
- Daley
- Murkland
- Wang
- Reilly
- McAvinnue
- Stoklosa
- Lincoln
- McAuliffe
- Lowell High School
- Shaughnessy

He then shared the processes for Initial Evaluations. The processes shared in the PowerPoint presentation are:

Speech and Language Pathologists (SLP)

- SLP's assigned to support non-enrolled evaluation backlog.
- All other evaluations (initials or re-evaluations) assigned to building SLP and re-assigned within the cohort as necessary to accommodate for remote vs. in person staff.
- Additional testing sites: Moody, STEM, Morey

Occupational Therapists (OT)

- All evaluations assigned to building OT and re-assigned within the cohort as necessary to accommodate for remote vs. in person staff.

- Testing sites at buildings.

Physical Therapists (PT)

- All evaluations assigned to building PT.
- Testing sites at buildings.

Mr. Lovato then gave an update on open positions and he stated that they have been using various social media sites as well as Indeed and School Spring to fill open positions. He stated that he is having trouble filling COTA positions due to the salary and recently has offered the position to several people that had applied, but the offers was denied. He is currently working with Dr. Hall to try and change the job title to an Occupational Therapist to make it more attractive to fill.

Mr. Descoteaux asked about the pool of candidates.

Mr. Lovato stated that it's been hard and that most candidates don't want to make a shift in the middle of the year. He also said some of the candidates are new to the field and the district at times has had concerns.

Ms. Doherty asked if we are utilizing staff that currently is remote.

Mr. Lovato responded yes and that they're using everything. He stated that they're also trying to assist principals to help them hire paraprofessional positions and that it's a challenge and that's not necessarily due to the pandemic.

Ms. Clark asked with the starting salary is for paraprofessionals and if it was comparable.

Mr. Lovato stated that it's about \$15.00 an hour which comes to about \$30,000 a year.

Mr. Dillon suggested if legal maybe we could print flyers up specific to job postings.

Mr. Lovato thought that was a good idea and will discuss it with Dr. Hall.

Mayor Leahy asked how this will affect the reopening in April.

Mr. Lovato stated that the staff is working on this and how to minimize unnecessary transition and not moving any students for unnecessary reasons.

Mr. Lovato then gave the following enrollment update:

- Sub Separate Students (3% returned on Feb. 22)
 - In-Person - 422
 - Remote - 170
- Mainstream (25% return on March 1)
 - In-Person - 670
 - Remote - 1,300

Mr. Lovato then spoke about enrollment management and stated that students will not be moved. He started that his staff has been connecting with families around in-person and

remote learning and that the Special Education Family Advocate Outreach Contact Focus since October 2020 has conducted 400+ phone calls, emails (multiple per family), and home visits. They have been providing support/resources to families who are struggling with remote learning and they understand/determine obstacles in attending related service provider sessions i.e. telehealth visits and completing telehealth consent forms.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to adjourn at 6:15 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Clark. 3 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Desmond', with a stylized, flowing script.

Robin Desmond, Chief Academic Officer
for Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent and
Secretary, Lowell School Committee

RAD/mes